

# West Virginia Farm Bureau

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Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairperson Genachowski and Commissioners Copp, McDowell, Clyburn and Baker:

As West Virginians fight lingering unemployment and dig deeper into their pocketbooks for gas and commodities, most of us would welcome new opportunity – and lower prices. That trend may be just over the horizon, thanks to the pending merger between AT&T and T-Mobile.

What does this merger mean for West Virginia? In underserved markets like ours, consumers will benefit from the decade-long trend of falling prices as wireless carriers combine. Plus, increased broadband availability spurs job creation and provides people with increased economic advantages as well as educational and professional opportunities. Americans in rural or low-income areas – which currently have less access to wireless technology – should benefit the most from this consolidation.

In fact, industry experts estimate that a combined AT&T/T-Mobile can make wireless Internet available to more than 97 percent of Americans, including those in small or rural communities. That's significant for West Virginia. That's why we at the West Virginia Farm Bureau support this merger on behalf of the 23,000 members we represent.

For the modern farmer, the benefits and possibilities of broadband are vast. Farmers can use high-speed Internet to track markets, research equipment and methods, and communicate with markets around the world. They can also develop and expand their farms with web-based sales, which allow farmers to sell directly to markets and individual customers around the world. To competitively manage a farm, wireless technology is now a necessity.

West Virginia farmers will be pleased to discover the faster connection speeds, lower latency, higher network capacity, and improved voice and data services that result from this merger. These benefits promise to improve farmers' communication with their workers, colleagues, and suppliers. And more efficient communication means improved productivity, driving down costs.

Yet increased wireless access is important for more than the needs of our bank accounts. It also appeals to our basic sense of fairness. Quite simply, West Virginians – and all Americans who live in rural communities – deserve equal access to broadband services.

Without it, many will remain disconnected from the opportunities this technology delivers.

That includes our unemployed men and women whose families continue to struggle as they search for work. That includes our young people, who are completing school and looking for job opportunities, and our educators, who need to connect with colleagues and access resources to keep themselves and their students informed. While West Virginia's farms are supplying food and fiber to our state's families, greater access to wireless broadband will be sustaining their connection to opportunity.

West Virginia Farm Bureau supports the AT&T merger with T-Mobile as a key to realizing these goals. Combining the resources of these two companies will give our farmers – and all West Virginians – access to new possibilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles Wilfong". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Charles Wilfong  
President